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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2017
TAGS: PREL, MARR, PTER, TU
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR ASD SO/LIC/IC VICKERS' FEBRUARY
12-14 VISIT TO TURKEY

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (S) Summary: US-Turkish mil-to-mil relations are stronger now than at any time since 2003. Both the political and military leadership welcome US intelligence support for Turkish military efforts against PKK terrorists in northern Iraq. This positive environment has helped revitalize the historically strong bilateral military relationship,

including through cooperation between our special forces. US and Turkish SOF are scheduled to conduct a joint/combined exchange training (JCET) at the end of May. The JCET will be the first since 2002, and represents a strong signal that the Turkish General Staff (TGS) in general and the Turkish SOF in particular are ready to move beyond the July 4, 2003 "hooding incident," when U.S. forces detained a Turkish SOF unit operating in the Sulemaniye, Iraq area. During your meetings with TGS leadership, you should welcome Turkey's robust proposals for the upcoming JCET and gauge Turkey's interest in expanding SOF cooperation. End summary.

Enhanced Intelligence Sharing Bearing Fruit

2. (S) The creation of the Ankara Coordination Directorate (ACD) and the Combined Intelligence Fusion Cell (CIFC) in November 2007 has changed the bilateral military dynamic. The ACD is a full-spectrum (intelligence and operations deconfliction) capability that is manned 24/7 by US and Turkish officers. Its mission includes assisting TGS with intelligence support; operationalizing that intelligence; and, where appropriate, assisting in the development of targeting information. The CIFC shares fused intelligence with TGS on PKK terrorists in northern Iraq utilizing MQ-1 Predator, RC-135 Rivet Joint, EP-3 aircraft, RQ-4 Global Hawk, U-2 imagery, and intelligence organizations supporting European Command. The ACD also seeks to build a foundation for long-term intelligence capacity building within TGS, one of several areas where we can improve allied interoperability. You will be briefed on ACD and CIFC operations, and will have an opportunity to see the capability first hand.

Air Strikes Opening Political Space

3. (S) TGS has launched six air strikes at PKK terrorist targets in northern Iraq since December 16. The first was the least well coordinated, with aircraft hitting targets as far south as the PKK administrative headquarters on Qandil Mountain. Subsequent attacks have been closer to the Turkish border and conducted with more advance notice. While the actual damage inflicted is difficult to assess, the military operations knocked the PKK off balance. The air strikes have confused and isolated the PKK, and opened political space for the Turkish government to proceed with the diplomatic, economic, and social steps that are necessary, together with the use of force, to resolve this long-standing terrorist problem.

Good Prospects for Increased Mil-Mil Cooperation with Iraq

4. (S) GEN Saygun's January 15 visit to Iraq paved the way for Turkish-Iraqi military coordination. Meeting in Baghdad while Turkish air strikes were underway in northern Iraq, GEN Saygun and his Iraqi counterpart GEN Abadi agreed on common goals in their fight against terrorism and affirmed mutual interest in more military cooperation, including in training and operations. GEN Saygun invited GEN Abadi for a reciprocal visit to Turkey by March. We expect that President Talabani will visit Ankara in coming weeks (although Turkish CHOD Buyukanit reiterated that the Turkish military will not meet with Talabani if he comes to Ankara). Further senior and working level contacts are in the works. These contacts can smooth out tensions related to the PKK and buttress our common, broader goals for Iraq.

Sulemaniye

5. (S) Turkey continues to maintain a task force of approximately 1500 troops in northern Iraq. This task force is comprised primarily of armor and mechanized infantry units, and multiple Special Forces safe houses. These troops have been in northern Iraq since 1991. Their mission is to monitor PKK activities. On July 4, 2003, U.S. forces raided a Turkish SOF safehouse in Sulemaniye, Iraq, detaining and hooding the Turkish SOF unit operating there, believed to be preparing for a clandestine operation. Former CJCS General Pace later expressed regret over the incident, but the image of U.S. troops hooding Turkish Special Forces remains a potent source of anti-American sentiment, especially in the military's junior ranks.

Turkish Special Forces

6. (S) The Turkish Special Forces is commanded by LTG Servet Yoruk. The SF Command is under TGS command and control, reporting to Deputy Chief of TGS GEN Saygun. The SF Command is comprised of two operational brigades each commanded by a brigadier general. The Commander of the First Special Forces Brigade is Abdullah Barutcu, and the Commander of the 2nd Special Forces Brigade is Zafer Celikin. The brigades are located at Golbasi approximately 30 minutes outside Ankara. You will have an opportunity to visit the Golbasi facility and see

a demonstration of Turkish SOF capabilities. The brigades rotate every four months into the Southeast. The Brigade Headquarters and one Special Forces battalion is located at Silopi, Turkey, just North of the Habur Gate crossing point into Northern Iraq. The other special forces battalions in the brigade will be divided between operational areas in southeastern Turkey, Turkish military facilities in northern Iraq, and as LNOs to Multi-National Division North (MND-N).

JCET

7. (S) SOCEUR recently approved the robust JCET program proposed by Turkey. The training program, to take place in late May-early June, includes special forces air operations, small unit tactical training, close quarter battle, mission planning, and advanced marksmanship training. Turkish Special Forces' forward leaning proposals are a good sign that Turkey is prepared to move beyond the "hooding incident" and eager to engage with US SOF. During your meetings with TGS and Turkey's SOF leadership, you should welcome Turkey's JCET proposal, and gauge Turkey's appetite to regularize this type of training. You should also inquire to what extent Turkey is planning to play a role in the ongoing development of NATO SOF capabilities, to include whether Turkey plans to participate in the NATO SOF Coordination Center (NSCC), and whether Turkey plans to participate in the federation of Special Forces training centers that is part of the NATO Special Forces Transformation Initiative.

Missile Defense

8. (C) Turkey is examining its air and missile defense requirements and is considering the Patriot system (along with the Israeli Arrow system, and the Russian S-300 system) to meet those needs. The military is keenly interested in the US missile defense concept and how it fits in with missile defense discussions currently underway in NATO. Your Turkish interlocutors will welcome any information we can share on the way ahead in this area. You should encourage Turkey to continue to coordinate Turkey's deliberations on missile defense with the broader discussion at NATO. As Turkey evaluates the various systems available, you should remind interlocutors that interoperability will be critical if Turkey is successfully to "bolt on" its system to a broader NATO system.

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